

# THE STATION OF LOVE

in Khwāja ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī's *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*

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**ABSTRACT:** The station of love is the seventy-first chapter of Khwaja ʿAbdallāh Anṣārī's treatise on spiritual wayfaring, *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*. The book is divided into ten sections, each discussing a particular aspect of the mystical path. The station of love is in the section of "states," which is preceded by the section of "valleys" and followed by the section on "saintly attributes." Anṣārī discusses the station of love in detail, as he does with every chapter, in three aspects, each pertaining to the three types of wayfarers: the initiates, the elect, and the foremost of the elect. The following is a complete translation of the chapter on love with introduction and critical paraphrase of ʿAbd al-Razzāq Kashānī's commentary.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most widely circulated manuals of Sufism is *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* (Stations of the Wayfarers) of Abu Ismā'īl 'Abdallāh al-Anṣārī (1006-1089), also known as Khwaja 'Abdallāh Anṣārī. It is a comprehensive treatise that contains both theoretical aspects of Sufism as well as a practical dimension that serves as a manual for the aspirant Sufi. It describes concisely each stage of the mystical progression that the wayfarer must experience towards unity with God. Anṣārī organizes the text in ten sections, each comprising ten stations, and dividing each station into three aspects. The ten sections are the mainstays of spiritual wayfaring while each station subsumed therein is considered a branch. The three aspects pertain to the three types of wayfarers, the initiates, the elect, and the foremost of the elect. According to Anṣārī, the wayfarer must traverse each of the one hundred stations such that each progressive station is a precondition for following. However, this does not imply that one must follow the prescribed formula of the text, since each individual differs with respect to capacity, preparedness, and determination, as the author himself mentions in the introduction. Therefore, the Sufi, under the supervision of a preceptor, undergoes spiritual advancement in proportion to his individual nature, keeping in view both his own experience as well the various modes instruction.

Anṣārī begins each chapter with a verse of the Qur'ān in order to call attention to the revelatory basis for spiritual advancement and the fact that Sufi way is none other than an expression of the Qur'ānic *modus operandi*. The ten sections begin with the Preliminaries (*al-bidāyāt*), followed by the Doors (*al-abwāb*), Interactions (*al-mu'amilāt*), Morals (*al-akhlāq*), Roots (*al-usūl*), Valleys (*al-awdiyah*), States (*al-aḥwāl*), Saintly Attributes (*al-wilāyāt*), Realities (*al-haqā'iq*), and Ends (*al-nihāyāt*).

Numerous commentaries have been written on the *Manāzil*, the most famous among them is 'Afīf al-dīn Tilmiṣānī's and 'Abd al-Razzāq Kashānī's. What follows is a critical paraphrase of Kashānī's commentary on the station of love. Kashānī's commentary is largely based on Tilmiṣānī's, at times expanding on some of his ideas and at others summarizing them. For this reason, Kashānī's commentary is more inclusive providing the reader a wider base to understand Anṣārī's original.<sup>1</sup>

Sufi tradition unanimously agrees that one of the stations of attaining God is the station of love. Man's love for God is due to his inherent love for perfection. It is also the driving force for the attainment of every station that draws him closer to Absolute Perfection, the source of all other perfections. For the wayfarer, each station is a reality through which he acquires an aspect of perfection suitable to that station. Since creation is a result of divine love expressed in the famous tradition, "I was a Hidden Treasure and I loved to be known so I created the creatures that I might be known,"<sup>2</sup> the object of spiritual wayfaring is to partake in God's purpose by

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<sup>1</sup> Kashānī, *Sharh Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 34

<sup>2</sup> This saying is attributed to the Prophet, but is not found in the standard hadith collections. However, according to Sufi tradition its authenticity is established on the basis of spiritual unveiling.

knowing Him, and consequently loving Him, after realizing that He is, in fact, the real object of hopes and desires and the sum of all perfections.

Furthermore, man's love for God is a derivative of God's essential love for His creation, as mentioned in the verse, "God will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, humble towards the believers, disdainful towards the unbelievers, men who struggle in the path of God, not fearing the reproach of any reproacher,"<sup>3</sup> That is why the Prophet Muhammad, on the Night of Ascent said, "My Lord, You have made Yourself known to me and because of it I have become independent of the creatures. By Your Majesty and Might, if you desire that I am cut into pieces or killed in the most difficult way possible, still Your satisfaction is more lovable to me," to which He replied, "By My Majesty and Might, I will not place a veil between Myself and you so that whenever your heart desires, you may call on Me, and the same will hold true for My lovers."<sup>4</sup> Since God's love is equivalent to sharing the "Hidden Treasure" with creation, the spiritual wayfarer attempts to perfect himself by becoming worthy of God's love through his free will. It may be asked that if God already loves His creation, what need be there for man to exert any effort through spiritual discipline? Since man's spiritual dimension is governed by his free will, he cannot perfect it by virtue of existing, like the other creatures, but the goal of man's existence is to acquire perfection through effort and struggle.

Love is only realized when the aspirant acquires perfection through spiritual struggle, and removes any property in himself causing separation from his beloved. Since God is perfect in every possible way, it is necessary for the wayfarer to remove every imperfection and deficiency so as to bring about an affinity between the lover and the Beloved and engage in Union. In this regard, Ṣadr al-dīn Qūnawī writes, "It is inconceivable that one thing should love another thing in the respect that that thing differs from it. It can only love that thing as a result of the property of some meaning shared between the two of them, in respect of which an affinity is established between them. As a result of knowledge and awareness of this affinity, the person who has this knowledge and awareness will seek to remove totally the properties of separation and to manifest the dominating force of 'that which brings about unification.' Then complete union will definitely follow."<sup>5</sup>

Much of all this can be derived from Khwāja 'Abdallāh Ansārī's discussion of the station of love in *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*. In this section he discusses the degrees through which the wayfarer must pass in order to partake in the reciprocal love of "Whom He loves, and who love Him."<sup>6</sup>

He first discusses the station of love in the section of "states" (*aḥwāl*). Love is the first station of the wayfarer once he has traversed the ten valleys of spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*). He writes, "Most spiritual wayfaring takes place in the valleys and the greatest effort is exerted here. It is the stage where the role of the intellect is present, the influence of Satan persists, and acquisition of excellences is still prevalent. This being the case, the wayfarer is vulnerable to destructive

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<sup>3</sup> Al-Māida: 54

<sup>4</sup> *al-Wāfi*, vol. 3, Abwāb al-Mawāiz, Bāb Mawāiz Allāh Subhānahu. 38-42.

<sup>5</sup> Qūnawī, *al-Nafahāt al-ilāhīyyah* (Tehran, 1316/1898-1899). (Translated by W. Chittick, *Divine Flashes*, p. 64).

<sup>6</sup> Māida: 54

influences and fears, as well as doubts due to the intrusion of the intellectual powers. At the same time, Satan's deception is heavily at work in order to create perilous ground and to advocate delusional claims made by the imagination. Were it not for divine assistance and guidance, most of the wayfarers would perish here due to the great number of pitfalls. But God guides with His light whomsoever He wills, 'And whomever Allah Guides, nothing can misguide him.'"<sup>7</sup>

The valleys can be characterized by dependence on the acquisition of excellences, rather than divine bestowal. In these stations, the wayfarer is preoccupied with effort, struggle and acquisition, and divine bestowal has not overtaken his efforts. Gradually, divine bestowal and human effort are in proportion with one another until divine bestowal overtakes acquisition, as when the station of "tranquility" (*tuma'nīnah*) supersedes that of "aspiration" (*himmah*). Ultimately, it results in sheer bestowal of those stations of the known as the "states" (*ahwāl*).

*Hāl*, in its verbal root suggests change, and mutability. Once it becomes permanent it ceases to be *hāl* and becomes a *maqām*. In the terminology of Sufism, it is that which a wayfarer receives by pure divine bestowal and is neither dependent on his will nor connected to his acquisition. Once his state (*hāl*) takes permanence in his heart through effort, it is considered a station (*maqām*). Nonetheless, since the valleys are the mainstay of spiritual wayfaring, in order to be eligible for divine effusion one must prepare the heart for this receptivity by relinquishing reliance on one's own efforts. "State is a reality received by the heart of a wayfarer from the purity of remembrance (*zikr*), that is, state is attached to the heart, not the limbs. It appears from the Unseen after receiving remembrance (*zikr*). Thus, state is divine bestowal while station is from human acquisition."<sup>8</sup>

The station of love, then, is the first state (*hāl*) mentioned by Anṣārī, which is the result of divine love for His servant, but it is also a love that the servant exhibits for God. However, the divine love for His creation is the source of the mutual love that exists between the servant and His Lord. In relation to this, Mulla Hādī Sabzawārī writes in *Sharḥ al-asmā'* that there are two types of wayfaring, wayfaring initiated by the Beloved, and wayfaring of the lovers. The first type is one in which the wayfarer attains God such that his arrival is without effort, struggle, discipline, piety and the guidance of a master. It is sheer divine providence and essential primordial guidance alluded to by the Holy Qur'ān, "Those to whom there has gone beforehand the best reward from Us."<sup>9</sup> The second type of wayfaring is one whose attainment to God is based on personal effort, struggle, discipline, abstention, piety, and the guidance of a master, alluded to by the verse, "As for those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them in Our ways."<sup>10</sup> As for the first category, it consists of the lovers among the prophets, saints and their followers due to their primordial truthfulness and complete sincerity. Their attainment to God is without effort and cause; rather it is a result of complete divine bestowal, succor and the Essential Will before the creation of the

<sup>7</sup> Kashānī, 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Sharḥ manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 320

<sup>8</sup> *Kashāf Istilāḥāt al-funūn*, p. 360

<sup>9</sup> *Anbiyā'*: 101

<sup>10</sup> *Ankabūt*: 69

world and everything within it, as referred to by the verse, “Their Lord will give them to drink, a pure drink.”<sup>11</sup> Sabzawārī cites Imam ‘Alī as saying describing those saints,

Verily God Almighty has a wine for His friends, so that when they drink it, they become intoxicated, when they become intoxicated they delight, when they delight they melt away, when they melt away they become pure, when they become pure, they seek, when they seek they find, when they find they attain, when they attain they unite, so when they unite, there remains no difference between them and their Beloved.<sup>12</sup>

It is the second type of wayfaring, the wayfaring of the lovers that Anṣārī is referring to in the section in *Manāzil al-sāirīn*, Kashānī describes it as coming between the stations of aspiration (*himmah*) and intimacy (*uns*). That is why his description of this love is one in which Divine attraction preponderates over the will and effort of the wayfarer. “Whoever embarks on the path of love, his striving will be effortless and without hardship, since he is led by the command of the Beloved due to its attraction. His wayfaring will be infused with delight and bliss, carried by love and driven by Divine assistance and guidance.”<sup>13</sup>

Aspiration (*himmah*), the last valley in wayfaring, is the power that motivates the servant to obtain the desired goal, whereby his seeking is tainted by neither the hope of reward nor the fear of chastisement. Rather, his seeking is purely for the sake of God and due to the intensity of his desire, he cannot withstand remaining stationary, nor can he tolerate separation. Furthermore, his fervent desire has prevented him from paying attention to other than Him and has facilitated rushing headlong into the ranks of the lovers. Aspiration (*himmah*), as mentioned earlier, contains remnants of acquisition, which is hidden in the light of attraction, but is associated with love since it is the utter extremity of seeking (*ṭalab*). In fact, its proximity to love is due to its casting away acquisition and relying on Divine bestowal, once having entered the station of the lovers.

Intimacy (*uns*), on the other hand, is the repose and comfort of proximity to God, since, it the source of collectivity, both outwardly and inwardly. Happiness is found solely in nearness and collectivity, while distance and separateness are the source of pain and sadness. Intimacy is the melting away of the wayfarer in the light of unveiling, or the beauty of manifestation, and the initial level of annihilation.

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<sup>11</sup> Mulla Hādī Sabzawārī, *Sharh al-asmā’*, p. 534

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Kashānī, ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Sharh Manāzil al-sāirīn*, p. 384

## ANṢĀRĪ'S TEXT WITH KĀSHĀNĪ'S COMMENTARY

Anṣārī begins the section, first by citing the verse, “Whoever among you turns back from his religion, God will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him,”<sup>14</sup> and then by saying,

**Love is attachment of the heart, connecting aspiration and intimacy,  
so as to sacrifice (oneself) and turn away from all others.**

Kāshānī states that love is the attachment of the heart to the Beloved, which is governed by aspiration of the lover. It is seeking without recompense and having singularity of purpose, while intimacy is governed by the disclosure (*tajallī*) of His beauty. Through absolute attachment one sacrifices himself for the Beloved and his turning away from all others results in annihilation (*fanā*) in His beauty. As His beauty is manifested to the heart of the lover, his annihilation is, in effect, sacrificing himself for Him, while at the same time, attaining intimacy with the divine Acts, Attributes, and Essence. Were it not for the aspiration of the wayfarer to attain the Beloved, he would not be able to withstand the trials and tribulations of the path. This requires absolute devotion and single-mindedness on the part of the wayfarer, which is alluded to by the term “sacrificing oneself.” After crossing this station, however, the wayfarer has the preparedness to enter the state of love, which shares with aspiration absolute devotion and with intimacy being absorbed in none other than the Beloved.

Anṣārī writes,

**Love is the first valley of annihilation, and the mountain pass  
from which one descends to the stations of effacement.**

Love necessitates union through annihilation. That is, being absorbed in the Divine Attributes and Acts due to turning one's thoughts away from creation. Anṣārī has used “pass” metaphorically for love and “valley” for annihilation because a valley exists insofar as a pass exists from which water flows down. Water is also symbolic of the light of manifestation, such that what flows from the elevated place of love is the light of manifestation into the valley of annihilation, devastating everything in its path. Annihilation in the Attributes and Acts is considered effacement of the wayfarer in each, respectively. So the first station among the stations of annihilation is effacement in Attributes, Acts, and finally the Essence. This is the general outline of annihilation in God, although its innumerable specifics exist in accordance with the state of the wayfarer, his capacity, will, knowledge, etc. It is in the annihilation of the Essence that the wayfarer witnesses the particulars of His goodness and beauty.

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<sup>14</sup> Māida: 54

**It is the last stage where the foremost among the common meet the weak among the elect. What is prior is ends and recompense.**

The common are those who are veiled from witnessing God due to their preoccupation with their customs. Those who strive in the way of God, and reach the station of aspiration, begin to see the light of manifestation and consequently arise to the station of love. This is true for only the foremost among the common folk and those who depart from them and join the ranks of the weak among the elect. They remain in the first valley of annihilation. The station of love is the last stage of the common, such that if they advance further they enter the ranks of the elect, which is then the first degree for the elect.

In the station prior to love, the wayfarer pays attention to achieving ends and hopes for the reward of his striving. They are, in effect, traders who perform works in order to receive divine bounty and favors, while the lovers act for the sake of their Beloved, neither hoping for reward, nor trading with God for his bounties. Sincerity in this station is acting purely out of love for Him. It is as Imam ‘Alī has stated, “There are those who worship God out of hope for His reward, and their worship is like that of traders. While there are those who worship God from fear of His chastisements, their worship is like that of slaves. But there are those who worship Him out of love, they are indeed free men, and theirs is the best worship.”<sup>15</sup>

**Love is the mark of the people (of the path), the sign of the path (*tariqa*), and the bond of relation.**

Among the signs of the wayfarers on the path to God is love. It is a distinguishing characteristic through which they are recognized and known. As for its being a sign of the path, a sign is that which if displayed outwardly indicates an inward reality. Love is a reality that is seen in the outward states of the people of the path (*ṭarīqah*), whether it is in the movement of their limbs, their breaths, the tears in their eyes, or the expressions on their tongue. Characteristics such as paleness of the face, emaciation, weakness, agony, thinness, gentleness, and constant remembrance of the Beloved cannot be kept hidden by the wayfarer and ultimately display his inner disposition.

As for the bond of relation, it is the relationship between servitude (*ubudiyah*) and Lordship (*rubūbiyyah*), mentioned in the verse, “Prostrate and draw near,” as well as the saying of the Prophet (p), “I seek refuge in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in Your satisfaction from Your displeasure, I seek refuge in You from You.”

Anṣārī writes that love has three degrees:

**The first stage is Love that which severs temptations, brings about pleasure in service, and provides consolation during tribulations.**

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<sup>15</sup> al-Kāfi, Vol. 2, p. 84.

**Love grows from awareness of blessings, is secured through following the Sunnah (Prophet's Way), and augmented by acceptance of indigence.**

The initial stage of love impedes temptation because the lover sees nothing except his Beloved, and is not distracted by anything so as to cause any sort of doubt. Satan has no access to him because the wayfarer has made himself pure and sincere for his Beloved. In light of this, the Qur'ān states, "By Your Might, I will certainly lead them all astray except Your sincere servants among them,"<sup>16</sup> referring to the Satan's vow to lead mankind astray. God, in turn replies, "As for My servants, you will not have any authority over them."<sup>17</sup> The sincere servants of God have set right their relation to God through love and utter sincerity.

Finding pleasure in service is due to the lover's veneration of his Beloved and humility towards Him. However great the humility towards the Beloved is, the greater the service and consequently the pleasure derived for the lover. Have you not seen how a lover worships the ground of his beloved, so much so that he prefers kissing the ground more than kissing the feet? The pleasure derived from service is due to extreme humility and veneration and preference of the Beloved over oneself.

Furthermore, the exertion of carrying out responsibility and obedience to His commandments is abated, unlike the love that emanates from the lower desires. For this type of love is temptation which arises from the mind after assessing the good qualities of outward forms. It is in fact worship of the lower self through trying to obtain its pleasures. If however, the wayfarer does taste transient pleasures, whatever beauty he witnesses, he ascribes it to the Absolute Beauty and Perfection.

Since the lover is neither attached nor loves anything but his Beloved, he does not feel the pain of tribulation. Tribulations are in accordance with one's attachment, so the one who is detached from everything feels no pain in either having been deprived of things nor losing them once having had them.

Love is cultivated from awareness of His favors—"He has showered upon you His blessings, the outward and the inward,"—because if the servant comes to realize the magnitude of His grace and its subtleties that he has received undeservedly, he comes to love Him, as stated in the Hadith Qudṣī, "I created creation and made Myself lovable by bestowing favors."

This is the origin of love and its source, which is to love His Acts and their effects, after having witnessed His beneficence, and inward and outward blessings towards him, such as his origination, his sustenance and continual protection, the power of his senses, his knowledge, his guidance towards faith and certainty, and all of the innumerable bounties expressed by the verse, "If you enumerate God's blessings, you will not be able to count them."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Sād: 83

<sup>17</sup> Al-Hijr: 42

<sup>18</sup> Ibrahim: 34



Following the Way of the Prophet (p) is to maintain one's obedience to the beloved (Prophet), that is, to adhere to his knowledge and actions, while emulating his states and statements so as to make one's interior similar to his interior, illuminate one's heart, and witness the beauty of the Beloved from the light of love. By following the Prophet, one becomes eligible for the divine love, as mentioned in the verse, "Say 'If you love God, then follow me; God will love you.'"<sup>19</sup> Love in turn gets firmly established for the wayfarers and he becomes the object of the verse, "He loves them and they love Him,"

The final aspect of the first stage is acceptance of indigence since indigence is necessary for contingent beings and is the initial stage of non-being. Accepting indigence is acknowledging essential neediness of creation towards God. It is be totally consumed by His Acts, Attributes and Essence so that He manifests the beauty of His Acts and Attributes through the agency of the wayfarer, increasing the wayfarer's love for the source of his own goodness. However much the wayfarer responds to the call of essential poverty towards his Beloved, the greater he becomes absorbed in His acts and attributes and the lights of His manifestation, and the love for Him increases. The wayfarer's annihilation is brought about by assuming the character traits of his Beloved so that even his own actions are nothing other than actions of the Beloved and his identity is subsumed under the identity of the Beloved.

**The second stage of love is to prefer God over all others; It is to make mention of His remembrance on one's tongue; It is to attach one's heart to witnessing Him; It is a love that appears by awareness of His Attributes, Gazing at His signs, and exerting discipline in (acquiring) stations.**

As mentioned previously, preferring the Beloved to all others is equivalent to renouncing everything other than Him. As for continuous remembrance of the Beloved, it is a natural consequence of the condition of the heart. This is because the tongue only mentions that which the heart is preoccupied with. Thus, it is said, "One of the signs of love is to constantly remember one's beloved," and love does not accede to restraint.

One of the inseparable manifestations of love, which arises from awareness of the Beloved's beautiful Attributes, is for the wayfarer to seek Divine disclosures and visions of the splendor of His beauty. So, whoever gazes upon the signs, which are markings of the perfect Essence written on the tablet of creation, reads,

*For everything there is a sign                      Indicating that He is one*

As for exerting discipline in attaining stations, it is a necessary precondition for arriving at the station of love. Since, satisfaction (*riḍā*) necessitates effacing one's will in the will of God, or surrender (*taslīm*) necessitates effacing one's knowledge in the knowledge of God, so that the wayfarers becomes the manifestation of His will and knowledge. These stations go back to

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<sup>19</sup> Āle-Imrān: 31

acquiring awareness of the divine Attributes—in the state of differentiation—since most of the stations in wayfaring are in fact, acquiring the divine Attributes, in the state of differentiation.<sup>20</sup>

**The third stage of love is that which robs one of explicit expression, refines allusion, and cannot be exhaustively described.**

The third stage of love is one which overwhelms the intellect when it moves from the valley of multiplicity of Attributes to the collectivity of the Essence. Since the light of the Beauty of the Essence is no longer unveiled by the splendor of the majesty of His Attributes, there remains no otherness and trace.<sup>21</sup> “Robbing explicit expression” is negating the role of the intellect, because of the fact that the intellect expresses reality through concepts and consequently words,<sup>22</sup>.

After negating explicit expression, the wayfarer “refines allusion”, which is by way of God alluding to His own reality transcending perception and concepts. God makes Himself known to the heart of the wayfarer since allusions remain in the realm of contingency for the lovers. After this point the wayfarer enters “endless description” which is to know His reality through experience and witnessing, rather than expressions and allusions. Since the experience of a thing dispenses with the need for definitions and allusions.

**This love is the pole of this affair. What is lesser is love proclaimed by the tongues, professed by the creatures, and that which the intellect deems necessary.**

The third stage of love is the axis of spiritual wayfaring to God since the central pillar of wayfaring is removal of ends and recompense and seeking God for His own sake. Only those who seek this reality are the lovers of God; those who seek the luminosity of the light of this love are successful in the final object of desire.

The wayfarers in the previous two stages speak of love and are capable of describing it but do not partake in its essence. This is because that which can be described and is connected with ends and recompense does not bring about annihilation, rather brings about subsistence, benefit and pleasure.

That which is professed by the creatures is simply a claim, whether true or false, because of their ability to acquire it. This is because it also engenders noble stations, such as the qualities that arise from the purity of the heart, and the subtlety of the spirit. As for the love with respect

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<sup>20</sup> As mentioned in the Hadith, “The near ones do not gain nearness to Me except through discharging what I have made obligatory for them. My servant does not cease to gain nearness towards Me with the supererogatory prayers until I love him.” Thus, when God loves his servant, He gives rise to the servant’s love for Him.

<sup>21</sup> In this state of effacement, the intellect has no capacity to grasp its reality, since the role of the intellect is limited to concepts and ideas that pertain to the created world.

<sup>22</sup> Whereas the reality of Beauty of the Essence can neither be entertained by the mind, nor spoken of with words, since there is no longer even the multiplicity of the Attributes

to actions, such as righteousness and favor, it is that which the intellect deems necessary, insofar as there is benefit therein. The intellect seeks advantage, and does not direct towards actions without expecting recompense.<sup>23</sup> Thus, it exhorts one to love the Benefactor and deems necessary the expression of gratitude in recompense for favor. As for the third stage of love, it is outside the realm of the intellect and whose light overwhelms the intellect and strips it from giving directions. There is no proof for its existence except itself, and its evidence is witnessing it.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> They are in fact, concerned with obtaining rewards and as a consequence cannot attain its purity because of their preoccupation with divine rewards and favors. These aspirants are directed by the intellect, whose purpose is to seek out ends and benefits, while the wayfarers who are above this station are those who have transcended the influence of the intellect entirely. Rewards and favors are still in the realm of created existence, while annihilation is “melting away all realities other than the Real Himself”

<sup>24</sup> The last degree of love is the one expressed by both Imam ‘Alī and the Prophet (p) in the sayings mentioned above. Through abandoning ends and recompense, the wayfarer attains the reality of this station, which is undoubtedly one of the stages of his perfection. Since one of God’s Attributes is the Loving (*al-wadūd*), the wayfarer, by attaining to this station, embodies one of the characteristics of God, which is in essence, the goal of spiritual wayfaring.

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